



May 2017 Newsletter

Sweet Potato Facts

Sweet potatoes are warm-weather vegetables that are not only delicious, but are also filled with nutrients. They are high in fiber, vitamins A & C, potassium, and are fat and cholesterol-free. As a food source, sweet potatoes are versatile. They can be baked, boiled, mashed, or roasted and can be enjoyed as part of a main dish, as a side, or even as a dessert.

Sweet potatoes come in two types:

1. Dry Flesh—refers to the feel in your mouth when eating, not the moisture content in the sweet potato. Dry flesh sweet potatoes are not as sweet or soft after cooking as the moist-fleshed potato.
2. Moist Flesh—this variety softens and becomes sweeter after cooking. Many people refer to this variety as yams.

When selecting a sweet potato, look for smooth, even-toned, and deep-colored skin. A sweet potato with holes in the skin should be avoided. Sweet potatoes should be stored in a cool, dark location for 3-5 weeks. For long-term storage, sweet potatoes can be frozen, canned, or stored in a cool, dark area of the home such as a basement.

A benefit of sweet potatoes is that they can be grown in a home garden. “Bush” varieties with shorter vines are recommended for smaller gardens. Full sunlight and a well-drained, sandy soil (or loamy soil—which is composed of sand, silt, and clay with a concentration of about 40-40-20%) are required to maximize growth potential.

Those with a mixed-vegetable garden should avoid planting sweet potatoes near taller vegetable plants which will block sunlight from the sweet potato vines, which are low-growing. Harvesting should take place in the late summer to early fall before soil temperatures drop below sixty degrees Fahrenheit.

Whether you grow them in your garden or buy them from your grocer or a farmers market, make sweet potatoes a part of your regular diet. You won't be disappointed!



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Local Events

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Scrumptious Sweet Potato Sheppard's Pie

Makes: 6 Servings

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef crumbles (cooked)*
- 1/2 cup of raw onions*
- 9 sweet potatoes (cooked or canned)*
- 3 ounces of raw carrots*
- 3/4 cups of raw celery*
- 2 1/2 teaspoons of ground cumin*
- 1 3/4 teaspoons of ground cinnamon*
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper, black, ground*
- 1 dash table salt (optional)*
- 2 1/2 teaspoons canola oil*

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and fill a medium saucepan 1/2 full with water and heat.
2. Wash the sweet potatoes thoroughly with a brush and place in the pot with water. Bring the water to a boil and cook until tender. Once cooked remove from the boiling water and set aside to cool.
3. Peel and dice carrots and onions into 1/4" size pieces. Clean the celery stalks and dice into 1/4" pieces.
4. Heat oil in large skillet or frying pan. Sauté the vegetables together. Add salt and pepper. Cook for 5 minutes until the onions are translucent.

5. Remove the vegetables and combine thoroughly with the cooked beef crumbles and add the ground cumin.
6. Place the meat mixture in a large baking dish, making sure the meat is layered evenly, about 2 inches.
7. Once the sweet potatoes are cooled, carefully peel the skins off. Place the peeled potatoes in a mixing bowl and mash until smooth. If using a mixer, use the whisk attachment at low speed and increase speed until the potatoes are smooth. Season with cinnamon and add oil, if needed, for a smoother puree.
8. Top the ground beef mixture with the mashed sweet potato mixture and spread evenly. The layer of the mashed sweet potatoes should be as thick as the meat mixture layer, about 2 inches.
9. Cover with aluminum foil or a lid; bake for 30 minutes. The internal temperature should be 145 degrees if using precooked beef crumble.
10. Cut in squares (6 per pan); serve hot.



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